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ABSTRACT

Discourse analysis describes a level of spoken text that lies between grammar and nonlinguistic organization. Using such an approach to understand the practical problems of communication in supervisory conferences, this paper explores two dimensions of the conference: risk and politeness levels. Level of risk is determined by the degrees of interpersonal power, distance, and threat. Study of the interaction patterns of instructional supervisors as they conducted postobservation conferences with teachers involved analysis of supervisors' written reports and transcriptions of conference videotapes and audiotapes, supplemented by interviews. Rules of interpretation of direct and indirect speech acts were applied to isolate orders, suggestions, requests, and demands. The theory of face-threatening acts, or FTAs, was then applied to determine the basis of choice of FTAs, to describe strategies elected for performing FTAs, and to describe related positive and negative conference phenomena. Findings indicate that low-risk and high-risk interactions were associated with less politeness and more politeness, respectively, thus confirming politeness theory. Findings also demonstrate ways in which FTAs diminish the instructional improvement potential of the interaction, thus raising questions about supervisor preparation and the value of such conferences. Three tables are included. (24 references) (LMI)

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FACE-THREATENING ACTS AND POLITENESS THEORY: CONTRASTING SPEECHES FROM SUPERVISORY CONFERENCES

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ABSTRACT

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND FACE THREATENING ACTS IN SUPERVISION

Discourse analysis describes a level of spoken text which lies between grammar and non-linguistic organization (Coulthard, 1977). Using a discourse analyst's approach and protocol as a heuristic for understanding the practical problems of communication in supervisory conferences, this paper explores two dimensions of the conference. Using field data, rules of interpretation of direct and indirect speech acts are applied in order to isolate orders, suggestions, requests, and demands made in instructional conferences. Brown and Levinson's (1978) theory regarding face threatening acts, or FTAs, is then applied to determine the basis of choice of FTAs, to describe strategies elected for performing FTAs, and to describe related positive and negative politeness phenomena occurring in conferences.

The literature on supervision indicates that the experience of conferring includes barriers to authentic communication, but that teachers prefer that supervisors allow choice and reflection and provide information with suggestions. The analysis presented here confirms politeness theory in regard to risk and politeness levels, and discloses effects of the use of FTAs including ways in which they diminish the instructive or teaching improvement potential of this supervisor-teacher interaction, thus raising questions about supervisor preparation and the value of conducting conferences.

Face-threatening Acts and Politeness Theory:

Contrasting Speeches from Supervisory Conferences

Recent studies have reported the logic and substance of supervisor-student teacher conference discourse[1], reported difficulties that aspiring supervisors face when conducting instructional conferences[2], and demonstrated the usefulness of conversation analysis[3,4] and discourse analysis[5] for exploring related problems in order to address the developmental needs of supervisors, particularly those in training. Hymes[6] has argued that a fairly radical perspective, one focused on local schools and observation of situated activity, is essential. Using transcriptions of audio- and videotaped conferences from local

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[1]Kenneth M. Zeichner and Dan Liston, "Varieties of Discourse in Supervisory Conferences," Teaching and Teacher Education 1 (Spring 1985): 155-173.

[2]Jo Roberts, "Administrator Training: The Instructional Conference Component," Journal of Educational Administration (April 1991); Jo Roberts, "In Preparation for the Public School Principalship: What Our Interns Are Saying," AASA Professor 10 (Winter 1988): 7-9.

[3]Duncan Waite, "Conferences and Contexts: Supervisors' Verbal Moves" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Council of Professors of Instructional Supervision, Athens, Georgia, November, 1990).

[4]John A. Retallick, "Clinical Supervision and the Structure of Communication" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, April, 1990).

[5]Jo Roberts, "The Relevance of Discourse Analysis of Supervisory Conferences: An Exploration" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Council of Professors of Instructional Supervision, Athens, Georgia, November, 1990).

[6]Dell H. Hymes, "Ethnolinguistic Study of Classroom Discourse." (final report to the National Institute of Education, April, 1982).

schools and individual settings, this paper reports a study of the claim that face-threatening acts (FTAs) committed during supervisor-teacher interactions, particularly the post-observation instructional conference, determine the politeness levels of both the supervisor and teacher. These speech acts on the part of instructional supervisors are intrinsically imbued with elements of distance, power, and threat.[7] The findings presented here constitute an examination of the predictions of politeness theory and the substrategies employed by instructional supervisors. The analysis focuses primarily on enabling supervision researchers to formulate elements of supervision interaction theory--specifically to determine the circumstances in which each of the five politeness strategies will be selected by supervisors.

The Riskiness of Face-threatening Acts

When taking another person's feelings into consideration, people speak or put things in such a way as to minimize the potential threat in the interaction. In other words, they use politeness. Politeness theory posits that the use of politeness increases with coordinate increases in three variables which can be combined additively: distance, power, and threat (known also

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[7]For related discussions, see Elizabeth L. Holloway, Richard D. Freund, Sharon L. Gardner, Mary L. Nelson, and Barbara R. Walker, "Relation of Power and Involvement to Theoretical Orientation in Supervision: An Analysis of Discourse," Journal of Counseling Psychology, 36 (January 1989): 88-102; Duncan Waite, "Behind the Other Set of Eyes: An Ethnographic Study of Instructional Supervision" (unpublished dissertation, University of Oregon, August, 1990).

as risk of imposition or extremity)[8]. In supervisor-teacher interactions, distance refers to the horizontal and social familiarity of the two people. Familiars usually are more casual and more polite with each other. Less distance may occur between a supervisor and a teacher who at one time were team teachers or who are also friendly neighbors. Distance may also consist of elements of affect, or liking, and interactive closeness.[9]

Power refers to the ranking, status, or social station of the two persons. Since the teacher essentially stands lower than the supervisor in social, or at least hierarchical station, we would expect that the teacher has reason to be more polite, and the supervisor less. This may be reversed, however, when the teacher feels (s)he "holds rank" over a brand new or inexperienced supervisor or supervisor-in-training by virtue of experience or other variables.

Threat may center on how great a thing is being requested (or implied indirectly as a request for action) by the speaker, the supervisor. In addition, if the hearer (teacher) perceives an interference with his/her self-determination or a lack of approval, then a threat or intrusion is felt; this requires

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[8]Penelope Brown, and Stephen C. Levinson, "Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena," in Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction ed. E. Goody (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1978), pp. 60-89.

[9]Social familiarity has been shown to have little or no effect on politeness, while liking appears to increase politeness as it increases. See, for example, Roger Brown and Albert Gilman, "Politeness Theory and Shakespeare's Four Major Tragedies," Language in Society, 18 (June 1989): 159-212.

increased attention on the part of the supervisor to the teacher's feelings, and is known as a threat to positive or negative face (see below). Threat is intrinsically greater, for example, when a teacher performs so poorly as to need extensive assistance with basic teaching methodologies than if the teacher needs to refine a single routine teaching skill. Such a threat appears to be compounded if the teacher is denied the opportunity to reflect on his/her teaching and to determine for himself/herself an appropriate course of action.[10]

Thus, a supervisor who requests that an experienced but familiar teacher make a significant and difficult change in teaching methods would probably employ a higher level of politeness in response to the increased "weightiness" or riskiness of the FTA. Determining the level or strategy of politeness is usually a rapid decision based on the supervisor's estimate/calculation of contextual elements including distance, power, and threat--all culturally complex items.[11]

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[10]For discussions of the necessity of reflection and considerations of fit and ability see Peter Grimmett and E. Patricia Crehan, "Barry: A Case Study of Teacher Reflection in Clinical Supervision," Journal of Curriculum and Supervision 5 (Spring 1990): 214-235; Jo Roberts, "The Relevance of Discourse Analysis of Supervisory Conferences: An Exploration," (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Council of Professors of Instructional Supervision, Athens, Georgia, November, 1990).

[11]Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). The authors have suggested that while distance, power, and threat (called extremity) are universal determinants of politeness levels, the ways in which power, distance, and threat are calculated are culturally specific. In Culturally Responsive Supervision: A Handbook, C.A. Bowers and David J.

The Concept of Face and Coordinate Politeness Strategies

Positive face is each person's want that his or her own wants be desirable to others--that others want for him or her to have health, self-esteem, successful professional practice. A threat to a teacher's positive face occurs when the teacher perceives criticism or insult (or disapproval, complaint, disagreement, contradiction, out-of-control emotions, irreverence, bringing bad news, non-cooperation, interrupting, non-sequiturs, non-attention) from a supervisor.

Negative face is each person's want to be free from imposition and distraction. In instructional conferences, a threat to a teacher's negative face occurs when a supervisor's directive or request (suggestion, advice, reminding, threat, warning, dare, offers, promises to help, compliments showing envy or admiration, expressions of strong negative emotions) is perceived as an intrusion into a teacher's self-determination.

Flinders (in press, Teachers College Press) expand on the concepts of what they have termed "responsive teaching" to argue for a supervisor's clear recognition of classroom language and culture patterns that reflect fundamental cultural differences. They also note that similar patterns contribute to breakdowns in communication between the supervisor and teacher. In their approach, the supervisor, who has the ability to read the subtleties of classroom interaction, is a third party who helps the teacher formulate and clarify instructional problems. While the authors argue for careful attention to the teacher's language, metaphors, tone, diction, and body language, and then suggest that in the supervisory conference the patterns of turn-taking, pacing, and gestures play into the complex task of framing social interaction, they do not detail how to recognize and address such issues in conference interaction the same way they do with teachers. I suspect many of the same issues are operating here and thus warrant examination.

Expressed doubt, disagreement, even indirect requests, which are known to be candidates for offense, may have this effect.

The supervisor's speech acts, then, call for politeness strategies in order to mitigate one's interference with self-determination (negative face) and approval or self-esteem (positive face).[12] Higher politeness strategies on the part of supervisors accompany more risky FTAs: with no risk, the FTA is done baldly, with no redressive or softening action. With the highest risk level, the supervisor's strategy would seem to be the other extreme: Don't do the FTA. Intermediate risk levels call for substrategies of positive and negative politeness, including, for example, hedging statements, exaggerating approval, joking, seeking agreement in safe topics, asserting common ground, being indirect, apologizing, stating the FTA as a general rule, giving deference to the teacher, minimizing the imposition, or giving something desired to the teacher. An additional facet of these strategies involves the element of going off-record or making the supervisor's intention ambiguous or able to be understood only by inference, which absolves the supervisor of responsibility and accountability for the FTA, which can then be denied.[13]

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[12]See Erving Goffman, "On Face-Work," in Where the Action Is (London: Penguin Press, 1969) pp. 3-36.

[13]For a discussion of related conventions of the original Brown/Levinson theory as well as some differences in interpretations regarding politeness strategies ordered against estimated risk of face loss, see Roger Brown and Albert Gilman, "Politeness Theory and Shakespeare's Four Major Tragedies," Language in Society 18, (June 1989): 159-212. Brown and Levinson

Failure to Protect Face

In some cases, a supervisor may fail to protect a teacher's face. It is possible that the supervisor's message is urgent ("You may be dismissed if you cannot improve"), that communication is poor, or even that the supervisor feels rage and intends to hurt the teacher. In the case of rage, the FTA may be on-the-record and not redressed, or done "baldly." Common ground, empathy, approval, and the gentleness of being indirect all disappear from the supervisor's talk under these circumstances.

Questions

1. Do supervisors protect teachers' face? Are face-threatening acts redressed or done off-record?

2. Do supervisors tend to select higher-numbered politeness strategies with an increase in the perceived risk in the conference?

3. Are there differences among supervisors with varying levels of experience as to selection of politeness strategies in regard to face threat?

Method

This paper reports on part of a larger concurrent study conducted in southwestern and southern public school districts.

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concede that positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record may be erroneously ranked unidimensionally, and R. Brown and Gilman have collapsed positive and negative politeness into a super-strategy.

The findings presented here constitute an analysis of the interaction performance of instructional supervisors as they conducted post-observation conferences with teachers.

Selection of the supervisors was based on a preliminary analysis of data from two protocols including supervisors' written reports documenting case backgrounds and interpretations, and transcripts of video- and audiotapes of conferences. In several cases the database (taped conference "observations" and documents) was supplemented by interviews so as to clarify significant points and ensure a broad base of representation by experience and gender within the sample. Pattern matches across case reports were sought and cross-case conclusions were drawn. To test the application of politeness theory to supervisory conferences, the documents and transcripts were searched for speeches including (1) contrasting dimensions of distance, power, and intrinsic threat; (2) face-threatening acts, which required interpreting and classifying speaker intent as suggested by speech-act theory[14]; (3) varying amounts of redress, including substrategies of positive and negative politeness; and (4) evidence related to estimated risk of face or weightiness. Codes were developed and tested for interrater reliability.

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[14]John R. Searle, Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

Supervisors' Politeness Strategies: Findings

General Findings

The three experienced and four beginning supervisors (the latter including two first-year supervisors, one novice, and one postulant from the field of social services) performed a total of 154 face threatening acts (FTAs) in their seven instructional conferences. These acts included 17 orders, 10 demands, 75 requests (of which 52 were indirect requests for action), 21 suggestions, 5 whimperatives (conjunction of a question and an imperative), and 25 loaded questions or traps. The frequency of these kinds of FTAs ranged from 4-51 per conference, with a mean of 22 per conference. Collectively, the supervisors were equally likely to threaten negative (88 FTAs) as positive (66 FTAs) face, and they used relatively less polite strategies when performing the FTAs (i.e., face threatening acts in these conferences tended to be more bald, less redressed). (See Table 1) The most frequently used negative politeness substrategies were hedging, questioning, not assuming willingness to comply, minimizing the imposition on the teacher's self-determination, and stating the FTA as a general rule to soften the offense. The most frequently used positive politeness substrategies were exaggerating approval, avoiding disagreements by hedging, and using inclusive forms to include both teacher and supervisor in an activity. Also used were identity markers, assertions of common ground, and making actions sound reasonable.

Experienced Versus Inexperienced Supervisors

In what were relatively low risk conferences, the more experienced supervisors (Alice, Diana, and Mary) all performed an average number of FTAs. In doing so, they were more likely to present a combination of direct and indirect speech acts in order to achieve their ends, and they escalated from indirect to direct speech acts as required by teacher responses. These supervisors performed more threats to negative face, thus imposing more on the teacher's self-determination. They were also less polite (more bald) and did not align their redressive actions for their FTAs with the nature of the acts; they were more likely to perform positive redress disproportionate to the number of threats to positive face. The effect was one of "telling you what to do but reassuring you that you're O.K."

In their relatively high-risk conferences, the less experienced supervisors (David, Wilma, Jill, and Craig) performed either an extraordinary low (e.g., 4) or high (e.g., 51) number of FTAs. These supervisors tended to be more highly indirect (with one exception) and they were more likely to threaten both negative and positive face. They offered both positive and negative redress and both were given in relatively proportionate ratio to their FTAs (See Table 2).

Case Characterizations

The following descriptions, derived from analyzed transcriptions and written reports surrounding supervisor and

teacher reflections on the conferences, characterize the supervisors' behaviors (See Table 3).

Case #1, The Director

Alice, an experienced supervisor, blends suggestions with indirect requests when she tries to get the teacher to do what she wants her to do. Alice tends to threaten the teacher's negative face, thus interfering with the teacher's self-determination, and she seldom softens this by way of negative politeness strategies. When she does use such strategies, they are positive substrategies which speak to the teacher's self-esteem. Indirectly attempting to achieve her ends, Alice asserts common ground when she might better minimize the imposition of her acts on the teacher's right to decide on her own acts. Alice's message is, "We want to improve, don't we?" Rather than "What do you think might work?" In her conference, Alice says, for example, "So we're going to want to try to foster those any way we can. And, you know, it doesn't have to be done formally." In another speech, Alice's words are peppered with suggestions such as, "It might not be bad to...ask her...and then say...and ask her."

Case #2, The Strategist

Diana's face-threatening acts occur with average frequency and typically are indirect requests and suggestions as opposed to orders or demands. In threatening both positive and negative face, this experienced supervisor tends to be more bald and on-record, with little backing off. She typically uses only

positive redress. She seems to be saying "You're O.K., but I will subtly and insistently tell you ways to improve." This allows her teacher to maintain positive face, but it limits her self-determination. Diana is experienced and in charge, but does not want to be a bully. Distance, power, and threat combine to make this a low-threat conference, and Diana's politeness strategies are coordinately less polite (more bald and less redressed). An interesting element of her approach is found in her use of loaded questions, which occur twice as frequently as the norm for the case studies. Diana ensures at least verbal commitment to change. Diana asks questions such as, "Can you think of any good ways to check for understanding [other] than to see if they've [just] got the process down?" After offering her own suggestions, Diana asks, "Have you ever tried it that way?" or "Have you done anything like that?"

Case #3, The General

The nature of Mary's FTAs in her low-risk conference is highly mixed: over 50% are indirect requests and suggestions, and over 25% are demands and orders (the latter being twice the norm). She threatens negative face, or self-determination, eight times more frequently than positive face but frequently redresses with positive politeness, thus assuring the teacher that she is "O.K." The outstanding characteristic of this conference is the baldness, the less polite approach which Mary uses. As an experienced supervisor, Mary strives to make the conference appear collegial but often her words contradict this.

She is similar to Alice, in Case #1, in that she seeks to emphasize we-ness, gives reasons to pursue what she wants, and also states the FTA as a general rule all should follow. Mary's speech frequently starts with words like, "I think what you need to look at...," "I think if you...," "What I want to do is see if we can...". More directly she says, "Have them come in and...," and "Have the books out...".

Case #4, The Eager Retreater

David, a beginning supervisor who is eager to introduce change and improve instruction, commits more FTAs. They tend to be requests for action (71%), of which, 82% are indirect requests. At the same time, he utilizes a wide variety of redressive, softening actions to be more gentle since he threatens both the teacher's positive and negative face. He exhibits over-use of strategies such as hedging and approval, which are linked with less direct address of the issues at hand. It appears to be a kind of approach-avoidance behavior. This creates a conference wherein the participants seem to be talking past each other. For example, David says, "There were some things that maybe were disruptive... but maybe had the expectations been [higher] -- and maybe they couldn't be...". Later in the conference he says, "You can mesh all those neat things you are doing with a little bit more structure...I guess that's my suggestion, but it's a suggestion maybe to try...maybe next summer."

Case #5, The Reluctant Expert

Wilma is also a beginning supervisor. In her high-risk conference, she uses indirectness and hinting to achieve her aims. Both positive and negative threats to the teacher's face, which occur infrequently (and, of which, 43% are loaded questions), are redressed with politeness, notably hedging and adding formality. While she is an instructional expert who clearly knows ways to help this teacher improve, Wilma fails to communicate directly and clearly enough to get anywhere. She says, "I'm trying to think if there was a way that could have been avoided. I don't know." She gently questions the room set-up, the teacher's purpose, student participation, and student retention, but fails to follow through with the teacher.

Case #6, The Heartless Dictator

Over 54% of Jill's very frequent FTAs are demands, orders, or loaded questions. A novice supervisor, she threatens the teacher's positive face baldly and often fails altogether to redress her actions. In this high-risk conference, the effect of Jill's pattern of criticism-loaded question-teacher response is an escalation of conflict. Jill opens with, "Do you really feel that they came away learning what you wanted them to learn that day?" Already threatened, the teacher hears Jill announce four times during the ensuing conference, "I'm here to help you improve," after which Jill repeatedly demands follow-up observations to "see if things are better." Self-esteem battered, the teacher refuses to surrender to Jill's demands.

Case #7, The Gladhander

As a postulant ("outsider" to supervision, in this case, a social services coordinator), Craig considers this a high-risk conference. Even when the teacher appears willing to discuss change and personal improvement, Craig refuses to interfere with her self-determination or approval. Craig's pronouncements that the teacher "did a real nice job, did a real good job" and that her attempt to reinforce disciplinary standards "wasn't that big a deal" effectively shortstops serious reflection on the class. The result is a conference wherein three of the four total FTAs are indirect requests which threaten negative face but are appropriately redressed with negative politeness strategies. The observing-conferring process is limited to two predetermined areas, upon which the teacher reflects but does not plan change, and the teacher pronounces the process "adequate."

Conclusions

The case study supervisors were inconsistent in the manner in which they attempted to protect teachers' face. Face-threatening acts were performed with a variety of politeness strategies and substrategies, predictable by the variables of experience and risk.

Low risk (the combination of distance, power, and threat) was associated with less politeness and high risk with more politeness, thus confirming politeness theory. While this held for the general risk level of the conference, it is not known if

it would hold across contrasting FTAs varying in extremity found in a single conference or across conferences.

Discussion

Since beginning supervisors typically enter instructional conferences at a great disadvantage due to risk (as defined by distance, power, and threat), it appears that their strategies to get teachers to do what they want them to do (arguably a typical goal of novice supervisors eager to improve instruction and unschooled in reflective conference strategies) vary considerably from those of experienced supervisors. Because of risk or threat, the novice supervisor may be either (a) much less threatening (low frequency of FTAs), less direct, and more polite than the more experienced supervisor, or (b) far more threatening (high frequency of FTAs), more direct, and less polite than the more experienced supervisor; these are cases of the too-soft and too-hard beginning supervisor. Achieving one's ends seems more likely with a reasonably direct approach to improvements, as suggested by the behaviors of the experienced supervisors, coupled with a skillful combination of indirect (at first) and direct (later, if needed) verbal acts. At the same time, since experienced supervisors appear to impose more on teacher self-determination but redress these acts with assurances related to approval or self-esteem, and since this is done less politely and in low-risk conferences (the threat of evaluation alone ensures this), one has to wonder about the potential insult inherent in the experienced supervisors' words. Are supervisors reinforcing

teaching as a profession or de-professionalizing it? If we are sure that a teacher's attitude determines the amount of behavior change, then the effect of our words on the teacher must be closely examined. Finally, supervisor preparation must begin to encompass these understandings.

Reconstructing Supervisory Practice. Findings indicating face threat and politeness problems in instructional conferences demonstrate the need to continue related research. Is the need to allow self-determination and approval consistent with the current thrust for teacher reflection? Do the inequity of power and threat issues imply a need for shared critical inquiry? Finally, can the study of discourse contribute to the reconstruction of the practice of supervision?

Teacher Reflection and Critical Inquiry. Dissatisfied with van Manen's[15] ideas about teacher reflection [which involved Schon's[16] concepts and Habermas's[17] three modes of empirical - analytic, hermeneutic, and critical - reasoning], Zeichner and Liston[18] turned to philosophical[19], rather than theoretical,

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[15]Max J. van Manen, "Linking Ways of Knowing with Ways of Being Practical," Curriculum Inquiry 6 (Fall, 1977): 205-228.

[16]Donald Schön, The Reflective Practitioner (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

[17]Jurgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

[18]Kenneth M. Zeichner and Dan Liston, "Varieties of Discourse in Supervisory Conferences," Teaching and Teacher Education 1 (Spring 1985): 155-173.

[19]cf. Daniel P. Gauthier, Practical Reasoning (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).

literature to build a framework for analyzing practical reasoning during supervisory conferences. Their final set of categories distinguished among factual, prudential, justificatory, and critical discourse; and, they reported dismally low "Reflective Teaching Indexes" (RTIs) during conferences. Less complex modes of reasoning appear to dominate instructional conferences.

In other research, Retallick[20] bemoaned the unequal power relationships of conference participants and suggested discourse study, including learning to reflect on participants' own language and communication. Lobbying for an alternative version of clinical supervision, as opposed to the prevalent technocratic approach (with its attendant issues of power), Retallick carefully framed his argument in principles of the method of critical inquiry. In his study, a critical analysis of discourse through the application of depth hermeneutics, supervisors and teachers engaged in mutual post-conference analyses of transcripts of their conference, thus "reflecting on the reflection," with the goal of transformation of their own communication structures. Achieving symmetrical structures of communication, or equal dialogue roles for the purpose of critical inquiry, and overcoming the hegemony of technocratic rationality for the purpose of reflection, proved difficult at

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[20]John A. Retallick, "Clinical Supervision and the Structure of Communication" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, April, 1990).

best. Smyth's[21] suggestion on this point is for teachers to work together in "assisted self-evaluation," a reciprocal and collegial process wherein both parties are willing to have their teaching observed, critiqued, and reconstructed, thus avoiding asymmetrical power relations which are inherent in the hierarchical arrangement where the work of only one party is analyzed.

Although he acknowledged Habermas's[22] criterion of free exchange as an essential value to a democratic society and as a powerful principle when applied to criticism of authority as posing constraints on free discussion, Hymes[23] was nevertheless concerned about the concept of discourse encompassing the ideal intention of free exchange, wherein topics or problems are worked through to consensus. Hymes was particularly critical of the conception philosophically "since it seems to leave behind entirely the fit of words to the world as a criterion of truth,

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[21]John Smyth, "Problematising Teaching Through a 'Critical Approach' to Clinical Supervision" (paper presented to the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, April 1990).

[22]Jurgen Habermas, "Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence" in Recent Sociology Number 2 ed. H.P. Dreitzel (New York: MacMillan, 1970), pp. 114-148; Jurgen Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society, translation from German by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979).

[23]Dell H. Hymes, "Ethnolinguistic Study of Classroom Discourse" (final report to The National Institute of Education, April, 1982).

and to substitute consensus, which could easily be a truth by community declaration."[24]

Thus we may be left with the disquieting suspicions that deep reflection is difficult, at best, to enact and that free exchange is potentially tantamount to shared error. Improved supervisory practice may be hastened by a significant mass of related research, including:

- consideration of the developmental aspects of supervisory practice;
- carefully channeled use of the "technology" of discourse analysis and other alternative, non-traditional approaches to the study of supervision;
- observation of supervisory speech and behaviors which are not typically open to recorders or cameras, thus capturing more of the diversity of supervisory acts;
- adjudication of extant research focusing on supervisory behavior; and
- setting a course to pursue what is increasingly a valuable goal in the discipline.

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[24]Dell H. Hymes, "Ethnolinguistic Study of Classroom Discourse" (final report to The National Institute of Education, April, 1982) p. 83.

				Nature of Speech							Type of Face Threat		Politeness Strategy Used				Politeness Substrategies Used	
	Conference # Supervisor	Experience Level*	Total FTA's	Order	Demand	Request	Plea	Suggestion	Whimperative	Loaded Q/Trap	negative	positive	bald, on record	on record, positive redress	on record negative redress	off record	negative	positive
1.	Alice	experienced	20	0	0	9	0	7	1	3	14	6	1	11	5	3	16	27
2.	Diana	experienced	14	1	0	5	0	4	0	4	8	6	6	7	1	0	2	12
3.	Mary	experienced	27	6	1	12	0	5	2	1	24	3	8	9	7	0	9	29
4.	David	beginner	31	2	1	22	0	2	2	2	16	15	6	12	10	1	22	23
5.	Wilma	beginner	7	0	0	3	0	1	0	3	4	3	0	2	2	1	3	5
6.	Jill	novice	51	8	9	21	1	2	0	11	19	32	33	9	7	1	8	11
7.	Craig	postulant	4	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	3	1	0	1	1	1	3	2
TOTALS			154	17	11	75	1	21	5	25	88	66	54	51	33	7	63	109

*experienced: 2nd year in supervision
beginner: 1st year in supervision
novice: first experience in supervision
postulant: from another field, first year

Table 1. Frequencies of face threatening acts, speech acts, types of threat, and politeness strategies/substrategies used by seven case study supervisors of varying experience levels

Supervisor's Experience Level	FTA Frequency	Nature of FTAs*	Type of Face Threats+	Politeness Level	Type of Redress	Conference Risk Level
more experienced	average	indirect & direct	negative face	less polite	positive	low risk
less experienced	low (1 high)	indirect (1 direct)	positive & negative face	more polite	positive & negative	high risk

*e.g., balance of orders, demands, requests, suggestions

+threat to negative face (self-determination),
threat to positive face (approval or self esteem)

Table 2. Characterizations of politeness phenomena in seven case study conferences collapsed by supervisor experience

	Conference # Supervisor Experience Level	Relative Frequency of FTA's	Nature of FTA's*	Type of Face Threat+	Politeness Level	Politeness Substrategies	Conference Risk Level
1.	Alice experienced	average	direct & indirect	negative face	less redressed less polite	more positive	low
2.	Diana experienced	average	direct & indirect	positive & negative face	less redressed less polite more bald	only positive	low
3.	Mary experienced	high average	indirect more direct	negative face	far less polite bald	positive	low
4.	David beginner	high	more direct	positive & negative face	more redressed less polite	positive & negative	medium
5.	Wilma beginner	low	indirect	positive & negative face	far more polite	positive & negative	high
6.	Jill novice	high	direct	positive & negative face	not redressed far less polite bald	positive & negative	high
7.	Craig postulant	low	indirect	positive & negative face	far more polite	positive & negative	high

*e.g., balance of orders, demands, requests, suggestions

+threat to negative face (self-determination), threat to positive face (approval or self-esteem)

Table 3. Characterizations of face-threatening acts and politeness phenomena in seven case study conferences